

Five Points Better Block

Follow-Up Design Charrette: Results

October 2015

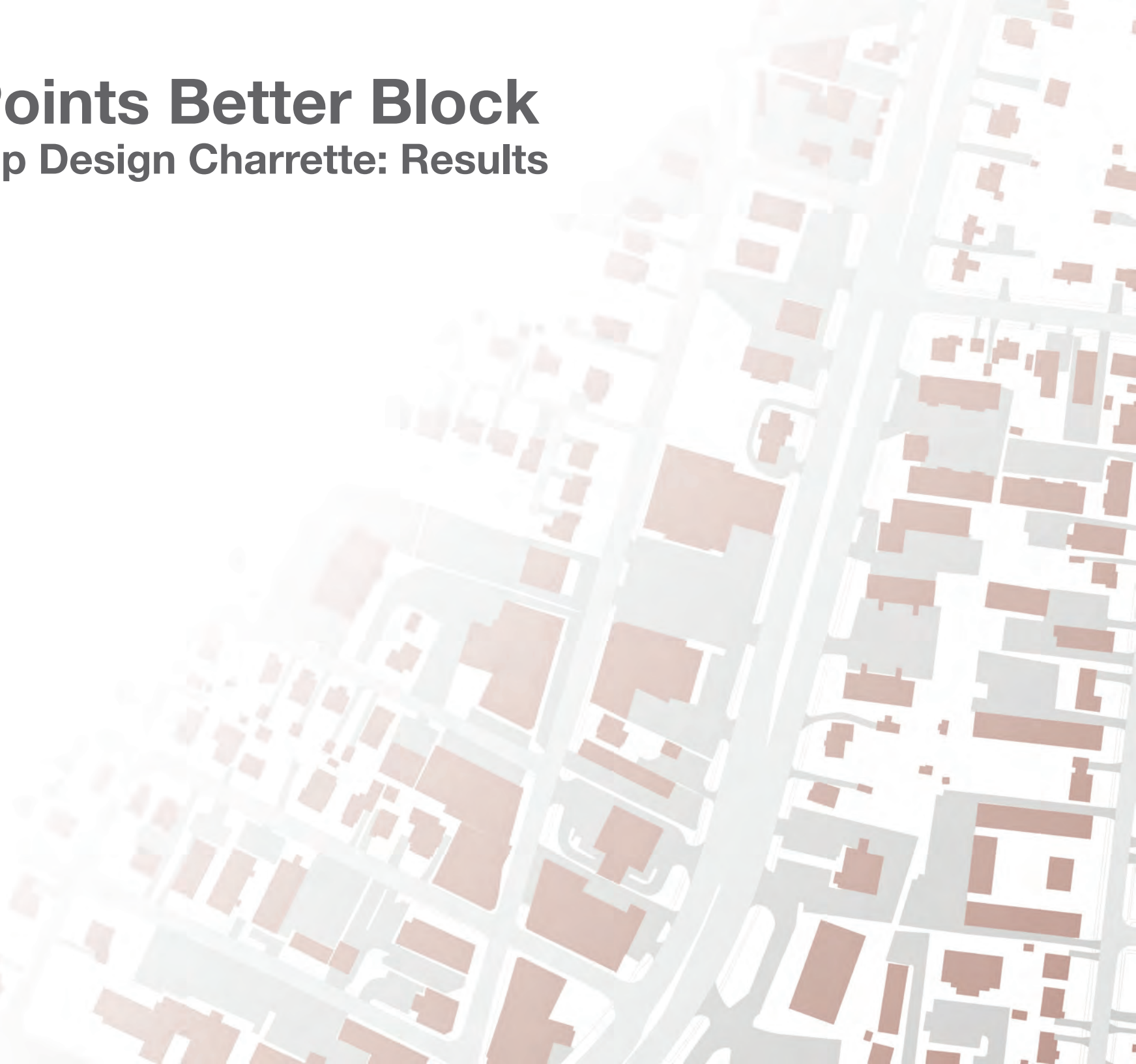


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Process Overview

The Planning Process was initiated by the City to obtain input for determining the best use of the \$200,000 budget from the Neighborhood and Commercial District Capital Program. It also included finding ways of coordinating this work with other programs, such as improvements to the Five Points Intersection, Better Block Grant Program and other economic incentives.

There were two public workshops or “charrettes”:

May 2, 2015

Understanding

25 Participants identified the strengths and weaknesses of the area as well as sharing their aspirations for the future.

July 30, 2015

Evaluation

The WPA and City team presented some ideas in response to the input from the first charrette, including modifications to the street pattern, pedestrian improvements and landscape recommendations. These were then evaluated by participants.

Next Steps include proceeding with more detailed design and addressing some of the longer term concerns of the community.



Strengths of Five Points

Participants identified the strengths of the area on which a revitalizing effort could be built, including:

- Many people in the community are trying to improve conditions and are working together to achieve a common goal;
- Business owners are invested in the area and are “resilient against all odds”;
- The revitalization of the Bank Building is an important first step;
- There are a diverse group of business owners;
- It is located in the geographic center of the City and is the “hub” of the City
- It is possible to anywhere in the city or region easily;
- There are large volumes of pass through traffic: 45,000-65,000 cars daily;
- It has a history as a retail center and is (or at least once was) a known location in the City;
- It is surrounded by residential areas with good population density which should be a good market for retail;
- It is in the center of the most culturally diverse population in the City and the highest percentage of immigrants from all over the world; Many of these are potential entrepreneurs for small businesses;
- Retail uses are close to each other; You could walk to get a haircut, food, dry cleaning, providing potential for a traditional, pedestrian oriented shopping area.
- It is potentially a walkable area because of this proximity
- There is little or no loitering

Each participant placed three green dots on the three best places in the area. These results are summarized on the facing page.

Green Dots

- A. Concentration of good things West of Sewell's Point Road
- B. Effort being made, good opportunity, people are trying
- C. Occupied businesses
- D. Gas station – provides service to community (serves a purpose, has been renovated)
- E. Restaurant – community wanted for a long time, good food
- F. Churches
- G. Chesapeake Blvd – good to have traffic but makes walkability difficult
- H. Neighborhood has had improvements in curb infrastructure along Green Street
- I. Potential for New Retail



Weaknesses of Five Points

Participants listed the key problems and weaknesses of the area that needed to be corrected in order to revitalize the area, including:

- Empty, deteriorated and vacant buildings in prominent locations create a poor image for Five Points;
- Fractured ownership of properties make it difficult to improve and redevelop properties unless owners work together collaboratively;
- Older, obsolete buildings discourage retail activity in present state;
- The Five Points intersection is confusing and dangerous for vehicles and pedestrians;
- The intersection is especially dangerous for school children who must cross it;
- Pedestrians are not safe crossing Chesapeake. There are no crosswalks north of Five Points.
- People who do not know Five Points have difficulty finding it: Arriving on Chesapeake you don't know when you are approaching it, when you arrive or when you have left it. In the past before street widening, it had a strong image.
- Streets and sidewalks are not well maintained, especially sidewalks which are uneven with nor buffer for pedestrian safety;
- In spite of the proximity of different uses, the area is not pedestrian friendly air walkable.
- Sewell's Point Road past the Five Points intersection is dark and needs additional lighting.
- Parking is insufficient.
- Parking is difficult to find and not properly related to retail uses.
- The lack of connection between Chesapeake and Sewell's Point Road makes the area less accessible.
- There is bad behavior in some of the neighborhoods, eg: drugs , prostitution, drunken drivers, etc.
- Some school children are unruly on the way home.
- There are diverse opinions about the PCO (Pedestrian Commercial Overlay): Some felt that it would help retail activity by creating a pedestrian environment. Others felt that it restricted too many uses and that it did not allow sufficient flexibility in site design, especially along Chesapeake Boulevard frontage.

Each participant placed three red dots on the three worst places in the area. These results are summarized on the facing page.

Red Dots

A. Vacant businesses in most visible locations

B. Problem Property

C. Five Points Intersection: Confusing to drivers, scary for pedestrians, especially school children

D. Image: Intersection has no sense of place (you don't know when you have arrived or when you have left).

E. No east-west connection and no access between Chesapeake and Sewell's Point Road north of Five Points

F. No Crosswalks across Chesapeake north of Five Points

G. Alexander Street – Physical Isolation -Drugs, absent landlords, island unto themselves – not connected to rest of the community, has been neglected for years.



Improvements to Five Points

Participants identified the most important improvements and then located them on the map with blue dots.

Five Points Intersection: Find a way of marking the intersection to make it memorable, eg: banners, signs, etc. Redesign the pedestrian and traffic routes through the intersection to protect pedestrians and clarify the routes to different streets for drivers, especially Sewell's Point Road.

Hugo Street: Re-establish Hugo Street as a two way street in order to provide better access from Chesapeake Boulevard. This may involve narrowing the section of the street between Sewell's Point Road and Chesapeake in order to align with the portion west of Sewell's Point road and improve to pedestrian circulation.

New Parking Lot: Acquire the site of the recently demolished building at the south east corner of Hugo and Sewell's Point Road in order to create a Five Points Business District parking lot. Provide appropriate landscaping and signage.

Markers: Signage, banners and other devices to create a gateway at Hugo and Chesapeake and create an image for the entry and parking area.

Lighting: Provide a lighting demonstration block between the 5 points intersection and Bland Street.

Cross Walks and Traffic Calming: Paint crosswalks and install planters to define parking areas and slow traffic along Sewell's Point Road between Bland Street and the 5 Points intersection.

Public Private Partnership: Encourage the owners of properties between Bland Street and the 5 Point intersection to create a unified development mechanism to fix up and market the empty retail space.

Marketing Program: Design the physical improvements to create an image consistent with the "Branding" of 5 Points as a local retail center with a unique character.

Capitalize on 5 Points Unique Qualities: Build on the unique aspects of the area including the eclectic mix of uses, the old buildings and its sense of history. Do not try to emulate either standard suburban style forms or rigidly impose a single vision for the retail programs.

Support for Retail Start Ups: Various programs are available to provide grants for improvements and other means of supporting new businesses and they should be used.

Blue Dots

- A. Find uses for vacant buildings
- B. Improve facades
- C. Clarify pedestrian routes though the Five Points intersection.
- D. Improve intersection for vehicles
- E. Connect Chesapeake with Sewell's Point Road
- F. Make Hugo two way
- G. Create Parking lot on vacant lot; possible music venue
- H. Unify properties between Hugo and Five Points to beautify as gateway (public/private partnership)
- I. Improve Sidewalks on Sewell's Point Road
- J. Revive old grocery store (beauty supply store currently with long lease)
- K. Utilize vacant lot where old grocery store and church used to be
- L. Parking – old pool hall could be used



Better Block

This process was preceded by a Better Block Workshop during the winter. That process tested a series of ideas for improving the area including streetscapes, pop up shops and programmed activities. Participants generally felt that the Better Block Event was successful and helped the community visualize a future for the area.

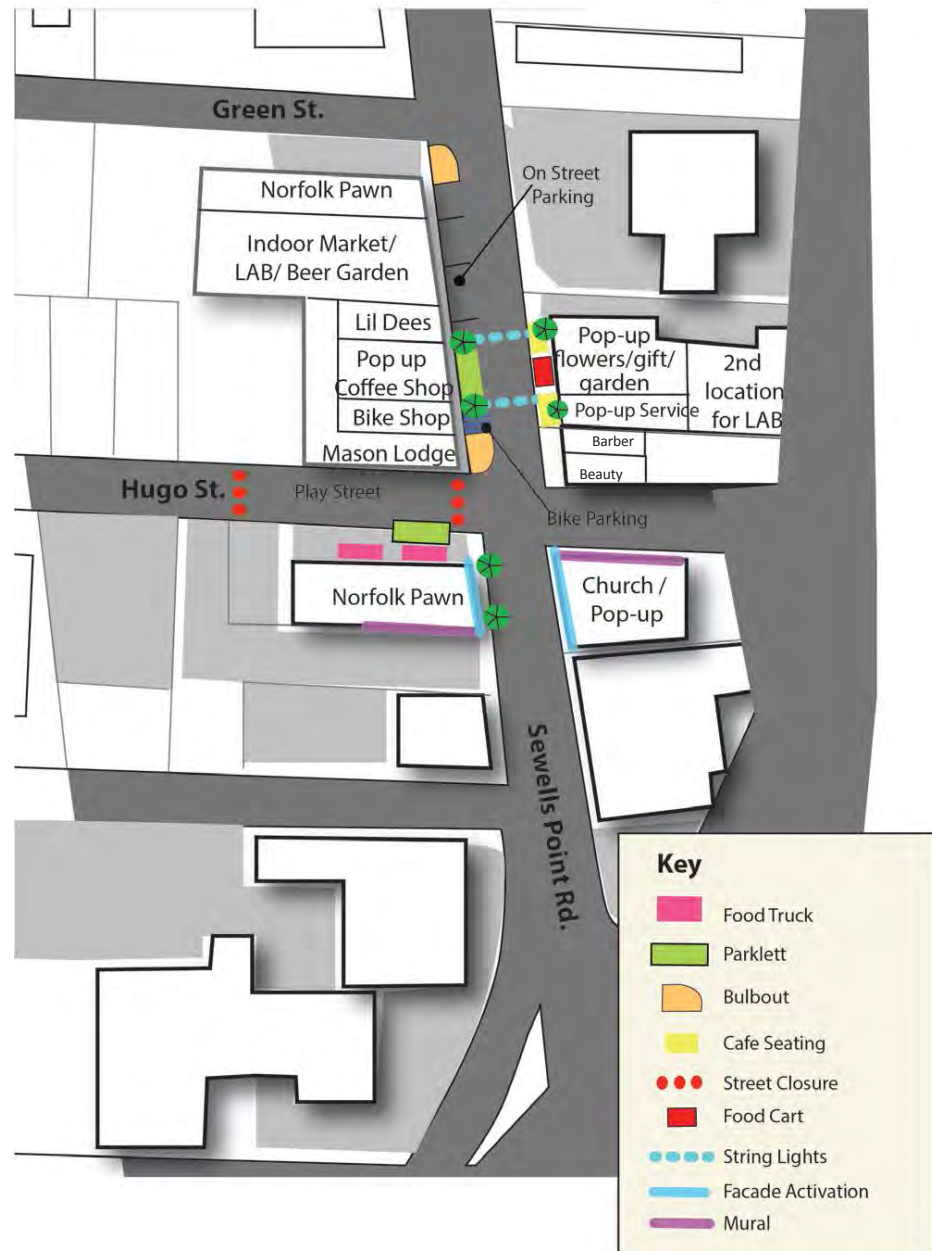
What was best about Better Block?

- Venue for music/entertainment (old theater)
- Food Trucks
- Envision/see the possibilities
- Turn nothing into something
- New visitors to the area that liked what they saw
- Potential of moving pawn shops to new location
- New businesses looking to expand from Downtown
- Crosswalk across Five Points
- Slowed people down to see what's in the area and also addressed safety concerns
- Landscaping
- Flowers in front of retail stores

Concerns about Better Block

There was talk of turning Sewell's Point Road into a one-way street - property owners want more people coming there - their goal is to increase capacity, not decrease it

Better Block Build Plan Norfolk 5 Points



Second Charrette

July 30, 2015

The second charrette opened with a summary of the input from the first charrette, especially the list of desired improvements. Members of the City staff then presented recent developments, including:

Better Block Grant:

The first Better Block Grant will be awarded to The Crab Pot for improvements to the building at 6163 Sewell's Point Road. The proposal is for a restaurant and catering facility which is expected to open in the Fall of 2015.

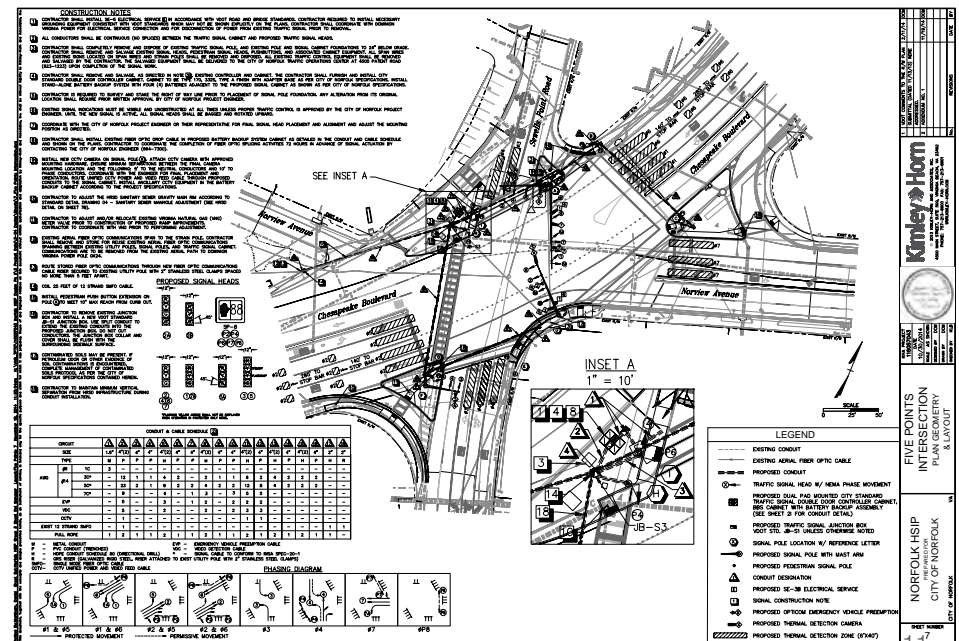
Norfolk First Program:

Chuck Rigney introduced the Norfolk First program on behalf of the Department of Economic Development. The program comprises four funds which will be used to help start and grow Norfolk businesses.



Five Points Intersection Improvements:

John Stevenson of the Department of Public Works project for improving pedestrian safety in the Five Points Intersection. It includes some narrowing of the vehicular travel lanes at intersections in order to calm traffic and to create better safety islands. The walks will be widened to conform to standards . The program does not including landscaping of the islands which it is anticipated could come from other sources including the Neighborhood and Commercial District Improvement Program.



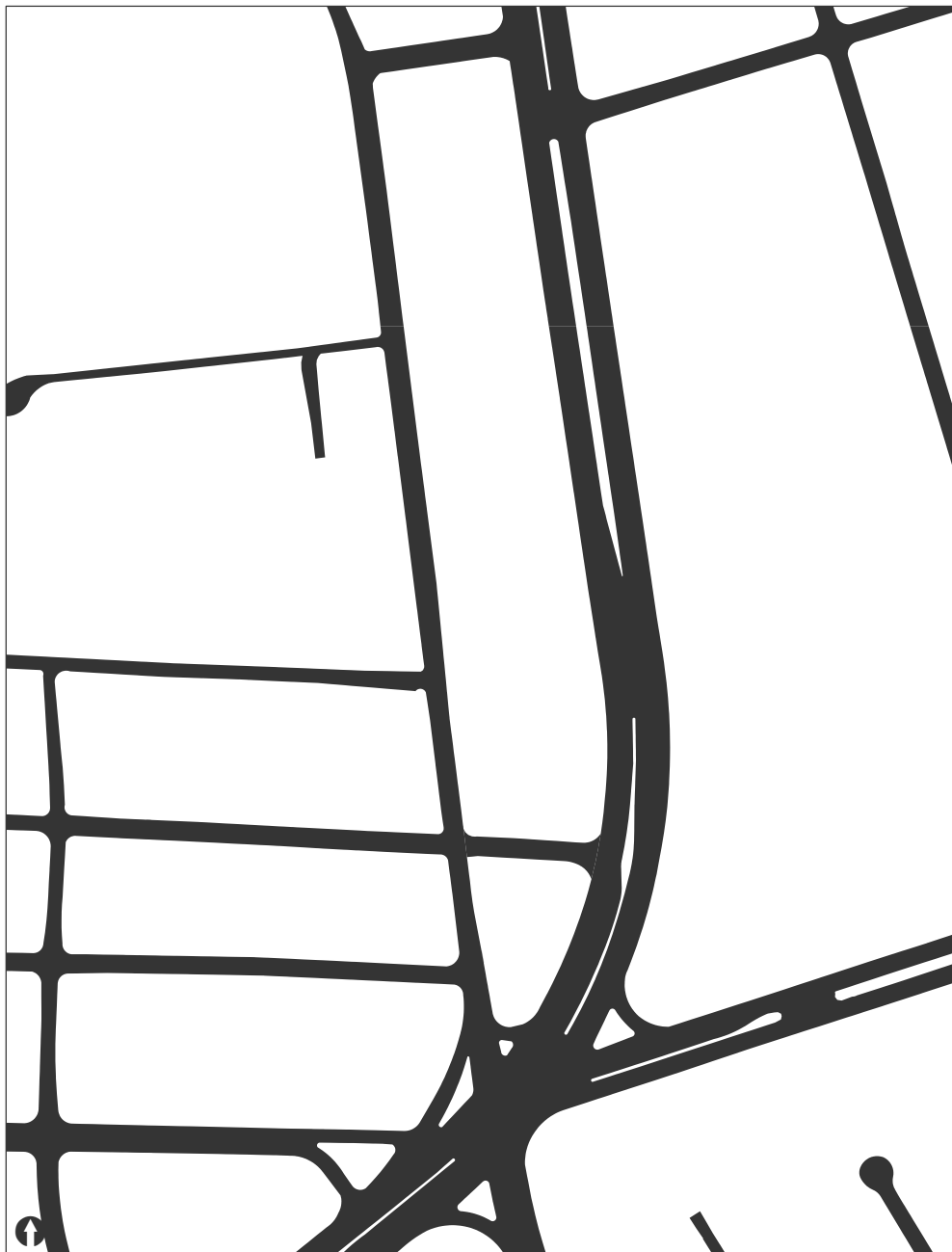
Analyses

Two analysis drawings illustrate some of the physical problems that were identified by participants and which need to be addressed.

Building Pattern:

The building pattern along Sewell's Point Road is fragmented. In order to function as pedestrian scale street, it should have retail frontage continuously along it on both sides of the Street. The opposite is true for Chesapeake Boulevard frontage. It is a high speed road and is very difficult to comfortably accommodate pedestrian traffic along it. The most serious case is the area around the Five pints intersection where there are small parking lots squeezed in front of retail frontages that disrupt the flow of pedestrians and fail to provide adequate parking. In order to attract passing motorists, there needs to be a clear pattern of buildings that indicates how to enter and where there is parking.





0 40 80 120 160 Feet
1 inch = 40 feet

FIVE POINTS - FOCUS AREA - STREETS
NORFOLK, VA

Street Pattern:

The street pattern is also fragmented and lacks connectivity. The properties between Sewell's Point Road and Chesapeake Boulevard have the advantage of both highway visibility and the opportunity of becoming part of pedestrian scale shopping environment along Sewell's Point Road and auto oriented retail along Chesapeake Boulevard. However, it is essential that there be east west street connections between these two writers in order to better serve that area. The Street Pattern diagram also illustrates the difficulty with the Five Points Intersection. It is very wide with several different movements through it and therefore confusing.

Two Priority Areas

The goal is to find the most effective way to use the \$200,000 grant from the Neighborhood and Commercial District Capital Improvements Program. The strategy should combine the various programs in one place in order to have maximum impact. For example, streetscape improvements should be coordinated with adjacent investment in facades and new businesses.

Sketch concepts were designed for two areas:

A. Hugo/Sewell's Point Road:

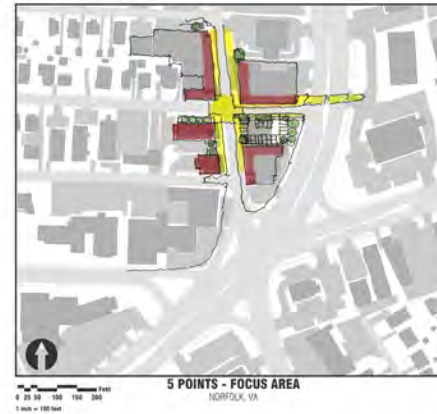
Hugo Street would be revised to function as a two way street, with sidewalk and streetscape improvements. A crosswalk system with planters or bump outs on Sewell's Point road would follow the principles of the Better Block Program's recommendations. A key part of this initiative would be to work with the owners of the vacant lot on the south side Hugo Street to develop a parking facility to be used by all of the merchants. This effort should be coordinated with facade improvements and efforts to support the opening of new businesses in currently vacant structures.

The goal would be to create a gateway on Hugo Street from Chesapeake Boulevard, with a landscaped parking lot surrounded by retail facades. The renovated Bank Building will be an attractive landmark for this space.

An alternative for this area would be to use a significant portion of the streetscape budget to improve the sidewalk on the west side of Sewell's Point Road between Hugo and Green Streets. This is the block which will have the new restaurant and facade improvements.

B. Five Points Intersection:

With the City investment in pedestrian improvements in the intersection, it would be effective to fund flower beds and landscaping for the traffic islands in order to improve the image of Five Points. One possibility would be to use banners to mark the Five Points Intersection. Ultimately, there might be 5 clusters of 5 banners to make a dramatic statement. Initially, it could be done on the "point" between Chesapeake Boulevard and Sewell's Point Road.



A. Hugo/Sewell's Point Road



Combined Areas



B. Five Points Intersection

A SHOPPING LIST OF POTENTIAL PROJECTS

A. Hugo Street

1. Street Improvements for two way
2. Gateway features
3. Parking lot
4. Facade improvements
5. Lighting
6. Support for new retail

B. Sewell's Point Road between Bland and Hugo

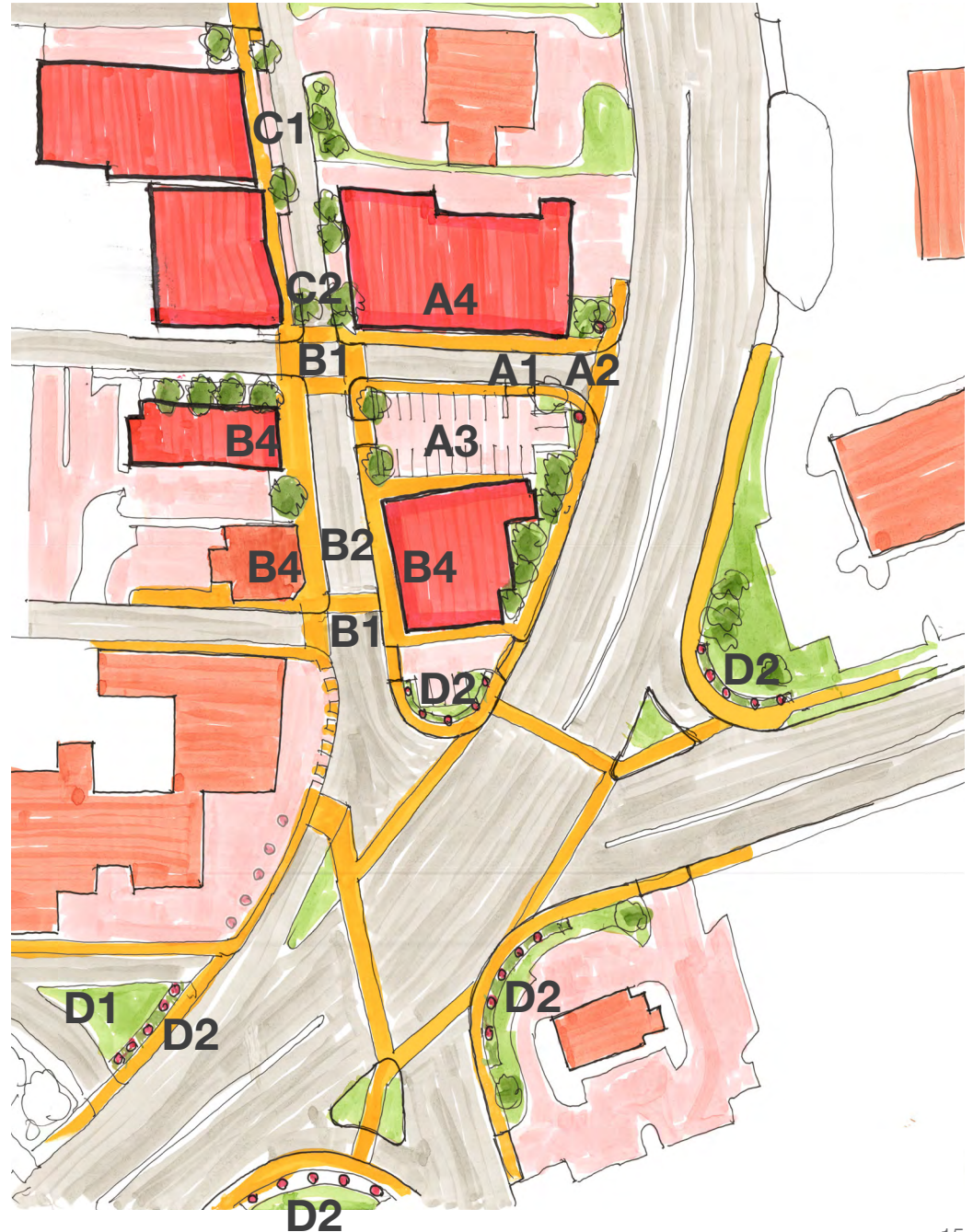
1. Cross Walks with planters at Hugo (both sides)
2. Sidewalk repair
3. Lighting demonstration
4. Facade Program
5. New retail program

C. Sewell's Point Road between Hugo and Green

1. Sidewalk Improvements
2. Planters
3. Lighting demonstration

D. Five Points Intersection - Create a memorable image

1. Landscape islands with flowers
2. Banners to mark "Five Points":
 - a. Sewell's Point/Chesapeake (North)
 - b. Chesapeake/Norview
 - c. Norview/Sewell's Point (East)
 - d. Sewell's Point/Chesapeake (South)
 - d. Norview Chesapeake (West)



Participant's Responses and Next Steps

Participants were generally enthusiastic about the recommended projects. They placed green dots on the most important ones, and red dots on ones that were less important. There were only a few red dots, all the rest were green. Participants said they thought they were all important.

Therefore, the next step is to determine the cost of each of these initiatives and see how much can be done within the present budget and whether there may be other ways of financing the rest. The first step will be to prepare a more detailed design of the initiatives in order to be able to do cost estimates. At that point, a third charrette will be convened in order to make the final selection.

A longer term recommendation is to consider finding ways of working with the PCO in order to better fit the conditions at Five Points. The present provisions will help to create a pedestrian scale environment along Sewell's Point Road and perhaps on cross streets. They do not work as well on Chesapeake Boulevard. There a series of techniques for creating parking lot oriented retail in one place and street oriented retail in another. Twenty-First Street in Ghent is an example of this. There are also ways of creating an image along a main arterial that is consistent with the character of the area.



A SHOPPING LIST OF POTENTIAL PROJECTS

A. Hugo Street

- 1. Street Improvements for two way ● ● ● ● ●
- 2. Gateway features
- 3. Parking lot ● ● ● ●
- 4. Facade improvements
- 5. Lighting ● ● ● ●
- 6. Support for new retail ● ●

B. Sewell's Point Road between Bland and Hugo

- 1. Cross Walks with planters at Hugo (both sides)
- 2. Sidewalk repair
- 3. Lighting demonstration ● ● ● ●

C. Sewell's Point Road between Hugo and Green

- 1. Sidewalk Improvements
- 2. Planters
- 3. Lighting demonstration ● ● ●
- 4. Facade Program ● ●
- 5. New retail program ● ● ●

D. Five Points Intersection: Create a memorable image

- 1. Landscape islands with flowers ● ●
- 2. Banners to mark "Five Points": ● ● ●
- a. Sewell's Point/Chesapeake (North) ● ●
- b. Chesapeake/Norview
- c. Norview/Sewell's Point (East)
- d. Sewell's Point/Chesapeake (South)
- e. Norview Chesapeake (West)

FIVE POINTS - SHOPPING LIST
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